

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 AMMAN 00404 251425Z

41

ACTION SS-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

S E C R E T AMMAN 0404

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MPOS, JO, SY

SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING -- JORDAN-SYRIAN MANEUVERS

1. ON JANUARY 24 I RAISED WITH KING QUESTION OF SYRIAN-JORDANIAN MANEUVERS REPORTED IN RECENT NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE BY FLORA LEWIS AND REPEATED LAST WEEK (JANUARY 21) IN PARIS INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNE. MY APPROACH WAS THAT ARTICLE SEEMED TO BE EXAGGERATED, PARTICULARLY IN ITS CLAIM THAT MILITARY COMMAND EXISTED BETWEEN JORDAN AND SYRIAN AND THAT JORDANIAN TROOPS HAD GONE TO SYRIA.

2. KING REPLIED THAT "OH, YES, THERE HAD BEEN AN EXERCISE WITH SYRIA SOME WEEKS AGO." HE WENT ON TO SAY HE HAD NOT SEEN ARTICLE, BUT HAD BEEN ASKED BY HIS OWN PRESS ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF JORDANIAN TROOPS IN SYRIA WHICH HE JUST DENIED. HE ASSUMED NYT ARTICLE WAS THE GENESIS OF THE POINT. WITH HIS OWN PRESS PEOPLE.

3. KING THEN WENT ON TO DESCRIBE THE EXERCISE. HE SAID IT INVOLVED "SEVERAL BRIGADES" ON EACH (SYRIAN-JORDANIAN) SIDE. THERE WERE NO JORDANIAN FORCES SENT TO SYRIA. THE PLAY HAD BEEN A COMMAND POST AND COMMUNICATION EXERCISE ON JORDAN SIDE. HE SAID THERE WERE NO PRESENT PLANS TO SEND JORDANIAN TROOPS TO SYRIA, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT EXCLUDE IT FROM

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SECRET

PAGE 02 AMMAN 00404 251425Z

HAPPENING IN EXERCISES IN THE FUTURE.

4. AS I OBVIOUSLY LOOKED A LITTLE PAINED AT THAT
REMARK, HE RECALLED THAT AFTER 1967 WAS A JORDANIAN BRIGADE
HAD EXERCISED IN SYRIAN AGAINST A SYRIAN DIVISION. THE
JORDANIANS PLAYED THE ROLE OF THE ISRAELIS IN AN ATTACK
UP THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS. HE ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT
OTHER SUCH EXERCISES HAD TAKEN PLACE BEFORE 1967 IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE ARAB EASTERN FRONT.

5. (THIS IS FIRST TIME KING OR RIFAI HAS RAISED THIS
POINT WITH ME. PAST INFORMATION HAS COME FROM UNILATERAL
SOURCES. KING OBVIOUSLY ASSUMED EXERCISE WAS NEWS TO
US. KING ALSO ASSUMED, AS HE DID WHEN FLORA LEWIS BROKE
"STORY" OF SYRIAN-JORANIAN JOINT MILITARY COMMAND JUST
BEFORE HIS US VISIT IN MAY 9* 1975, THAT ISRAELIS
WERE HER SOURCE.)
PICKERING

SECRET

NNN

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